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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002969

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD, NEA/PPA, NEA/AGS, INR/IZ,  
INR/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ, AL-JAFARI, IRAN, RESISTANCE;  
BAGHDAD

1. SUMMARY: The major themes in the daily newspapers on July 17 were Al-Jafari's visit to Tehran, the constitutional committee's preparations for drafting the constitution, and the latest developments of the security situation. END SUMMARY.

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1A. "Waiting for the fruits" (As-Sabah, 7/17)

As-Sabah (independent) published a front-page editorial by Jum'a Al-Hilfi about Prime Minister Al-Jafari's visit to Tehran:

"Accompanied by a delegation of ministers, government officials, and journalists, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Jafari has begun his visit to Tehran. This visit is very important as it comes after a period of relative calm between the two countries and coincides with the latest difficulties in the Iraqi situation. Not only is Iraq countering local and foreign terrorism, but it also faces public crises and problems that have persisted for the past two years.

We hope that the discussions in Tehran will focus on mutual cooperation concerning security, water, electricity, and other vital issues. The results of these meetings should be beneficial for both countries. Indeed, we are waiting for these discussions to put an end to the pending issues that have long existed between our two countries. We want to forget the painful past that was caused by Saddam's war.

We want to open a new page of fruitful cooperation that will benefit the interests of both countries. We would like to establish a relationship that is based on mutual respect and non-interference in one another's internal affairs. Al-Jafari's visit is also aimed at confirming the legitimacy and independence of the Iraqi government and to demonstrate its ability to cooperate and deal with its neighbors and other countries in the world. However, we must be careful to steer clear from submissiveness to any country. We wish the Iraqi delegation success and hope that it will achieve fruitful results and have a safe return home."

1B. "Will the government recognize the resistance?" (Ad-Dustoor, 7/17)

Ad-Dustoor (independent) published a front-page editorial by Bassem Al-Sheikh about armed groups and their dialogue with the Iraqi government:

"Does the Iraqi government have to recognize the resistance? What would be the real goal behind such a measure? What are the possible benefits from this recognition? Does the U.S. government's secret dialogue with armed groups imply that the Americans recognize the resistance? Will this strategy lead to positive or negative results? Without a doubt, the answers to these questions will have a significant impact on the current political process in Iraq.

Some Iraqis hypothesize that the Iraqi government's recognition of the resistance represents an advancement in the political process. However, such theories must distinguish between the legitimate resistance and those terrorists that are killing innocent civilians under different pretexts. This represents a very important step in making the resistance a part of the Iraqi political entity. Such an accomplishment would be considered a significant and tangible development in the Iraqi situation. In addition, incorporating the resistance into the political process will distinguish those terrorist groups that refuse all forms of dialogue and participation in the new Iraq. Consequently, we will be able to surround

and eradicate these groups. Once this occurs, the security situation will be stabilized, the government will not be totalitarian, and basic services will improve.

On the other hand, other Iraqis oppose having a dialogue with the resistance. The views of these individuals contradict with that of the majority of Iraqi society, which accepts dialogue with the resistance as the best solution to end the current crisis. It is up to the Iraqi government to answer these questions in an objective manner. We have heard some officials state that they are ready to cooperate with the devil in order to get rid of terrorism. The Iraqi people formerly accepted this idea of dealing with the devil in order to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Therefore, why do we not have that same level of readiness when it comes to the security and stability of our country?"

SATTERFIELD